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ABSTRACT

Research studies dealing with the effects of teacher characteristics on pupil achievement were reviewed. Teacher behaviors and characteristics emanating from this research are presented in a profile of successful teachers: (1) Cognitive Organization--the teacher reflects a grasp of subject matter and an understanding of perception and perception-modification, possesses a sound method for teaching concept attainment, and makes possible situations for student development of insight into concepts of the subject matter; (2) Creativity--the teacher minimizes threats to learning and maximizes attractions, approaches work in new and unusual ways, involves students in plans, creates activities which encourage creative thinking, is supportive, and allows students to exhibit many forms of expression; (3) Acceptance--the teacher communicates with and accepts students; and (4) Openness--the teacher seeks and responds to information from students, and perceives and expresses students' points of view. (JD)

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RESEARCH-BASED ENGLISH TEACHER SKILLS FOR CLASSROOM INTERACTION

by
WILLIAM H. PETERS

The personality and teaching style of the teacher, whether contrived or spontaneous, appear to influence the environment to which the student is responding and adjusting, and what transpires in the classroom between the teacher and students is apparently influenced to a great extent by the teacher. Alexander and Elson (1971) studied the effects of teacher-initiated personal interactions on the achievements of students, and findings from this study emphasized the importance of affective teacher variables for student learning at higher levels. Harris (1973) found that students taught by a teacher who modeled flexible, divergent, or creative behavior increased in creative behavior more than students with teachers who did not provide such modeling. Experimental studies of questioning by Ward and Tikunoff (1975) and by the Stanford Program on Teaching Effectiveness (1976) found that students who were in classes where more recall questions were asked did slightly better on recall tests, yet students did equally well on integrative questions regardless of what percent of recall questions were asked in class. In a similar vein, Wright and Nuthall found significant positive results in student responses when teachers exhibited a probing behavior (1970); yet Brophy and Evertson did not find a relationship between seeking improved responses and achievement (1976). Other studies have involved areas such as direct and indirect instruction (for example, Flanders, 1970; Samph, 1974); teacher praise (for example, Soar, 1973; Brophy and Evertson, 1974; Stallings and Kaskowitz, 1975); and teacher enthusiasm (for example, Mastin, 1963; Brophy and Evertson, 1976).

In order to investigate the effects of teacher characteristics on pupil achievement, observation of actual instances of instruction in the classroom becomes parapount. Techniques for measuring classroom behaviors began to be available when Medley and Mitzel (1958) published the Observation Schedule and Record (OScAR) and when Flanders (1960) published the initial findings of his Interaction Analysis Categories system (FIAC). Rosenshine (1976) reports that the work of such individuals as Flanders, Medley, and Mitzel ushered in the modern era of studies on teacher effectiveness. Even in this "modern era" only a limited number of studies which investigate the relationship between classroom instruction and student achievement has been conducted and the number of researchers involved is equally small.

A study by Peters and Blues (1978) which focused its attention on the effect of one teacher characteristic, preference for complexity and tol-

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ance to ambiguity as measured by the Co Scale of the Omnibus Personality Inventory, on student achievement in response to literature suggested that high Co OPI teachers contribute more positively than low Co OPI teachers to student written ability to interpret literature. One of the recommendations of this study was the need for further research into the characteristics attributed to high Co scorers and low Co scorers through observation and evaluation in the classroom in order to define teacher behaviors which could be associated with effective and noneffective teachers. If learning outcomes of students relate to high complexity teachers, then it seemed probable that a trait such as tolerance to ambiguity and preference for complexity as measured by the Co Scale of the OPI would relate to verbal reactions which the teacher creates in the classroom. A second study by Peters and Amburgey (1982), therefore, focused its attention on determining if there were differences between verbal reactions in classroom environments created by teachers who score high on the Co Scale of the Omnibus Personality Inventory and teachers who score low on the Co Scale of the Omnibus Personality Inventory. The measure of perception called Complexity--Co, is related to an open, creative approach to phenomena and is a measure of intellectual disposition or orientation (OPI, 1962). Co has its highest correlations with the measures of Creative Personality (.58) and Intellectual Quality (.52) on the Opinion, Attitude and Interest Survey (OAIS). It correlates -.33 with the measure of a need for Order in the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule and .47 with a need for Autonomy. In terms of the Activities Index, Co correlates .46 with a need for change and a -.49 with a need for order. The estimate of reliability for the OPI was based on three different samples. Estimates of the internal consistency of the OPI measures and the test-retest values range from .67 to .89. The observation instrument used to code verbal reactions was Gordon Mork's Verbal Reaction Behavior Log. The VRBL has three major categories: Cognitive, Skill, and Affective.

The Peters and Amburgey study provided evidence that high complexity teachers move their students into higher levels of cognition which allows for challenges to student thinking. It appears that high complexity teachers have an intellectual disposition which mentally challenges student thought and demands more support for contention, greater divergence in analysis, more contrast, more inference, deeper response. The high complexity teacher appears to be capable of establishing greater interaction in the classroom. It is through interaction that the student becomes more expressive, more conscious of how he is expressing himself, and aware of how his classmates' views either coincide or conflict with his own. Without interaction, he is unable to determine if the teacher, for instance, has explained a certain statement to everyone's satisfaction except his own; he is conscious of the weight of his words and those of his peers; he is more alert to the classroom environment, as he is more a part of it.

The teacher who is himself tolerant of ambiguities and has a preference for complexities apparently does create a different atmosphere in terms of verbal interaction, in terms of the amount of pupil-teacher interaction, in terms of dealing in the highest levels of cognitive and

skill development, in terms of allowing more student responses, in terms of personal involvement and positive reinforcement as well as in terms of dealing in those areas which require innovative and unusual approaches, specifically in terms of moving student to higher levels of cognition.

Although one criticism of education is that teachers do not challenge students to move to higher levels of thinking, the results of the interactions in the high complexity teachers' classrooms suggest that teachers possessing those traits characteristic of high Co scorers did allow students high level cognitive verbal interactions. The processes exemplified by high complexity teachers were those which Hilda Taba believed should be encouraged. In her book Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice, she wrote:

> If...formulations are presented to the student ready-made, his own perceptions have nothing to do with what is included or omitted from the reservoir of the past. There is no way for him to give meaning to these formulations. He is unaware of the thought forms in terms of which that knowledge is organized. His mind cannot make them his own, use them to form other ideas, and integrate them into a system of generalizations he already has. It is the experience of inquiring, reflecting, relating, and generalizing that is important, not whether ideas and facts that are used for the material come from the past or from the current experience.... Teaching for creative and productive thinking must help the student in the reasonable restructuring and reorientation which enables him to see problems, events, and ideas in a new perspective (pp. 116-117).

Teacher characteristics and accompanying teacher behaviors emanating from the research reported in this article are presented in the following profile of the behaviors which appear to be exhibited by high complexity teachers.

High Complexity Teacher Profile

Cognitive organization:	the teacher reflects a grasp of the subject matter
	the teacher reflects a valid, systematic structure of the subject matter
	the teacher reflects an understanding of the concepts of the subject matter
	the teacher reflects freedom from the textbook
	the teacher reflects an understanding of perception and perception-modificiation

	the teacher reflects a sound method for teaching concept attainment
	the teacher makes possible situations for student development of insight into concepts of the subject matter
Creativity:	the teacher minimizes threats to learning
	the teacher maximizes attractions to learning and personal growth
	the teacher approaches the scheme of work in new and unusual ways
	the teacher's plans opens fields for students through introduction of additional sources of information or of other facets for exploration
	the teacher's plans involve the students
	the teacher uses problem-solving situations and creates activities which cause students to consider alternative ways of thinking
	the teacher allows students to exhibit many forms of expressions or output of ideas
	the teacher makes it possible to be supportive of students
Acceptance:	the teacher's plans reflect faith in the students' ability to learn
	the teacher's plans make it possible to treat students as persons without an attempt to control them
	the teacher's plans make it possible to listen with understanding and to communicate this understanding of students' feelings, experiences, and thoughts
Openness:	the teacher seeks information from his students
	the teacher's plans make it possible to receive and respond to information from students on the intrinsic merits of the information
	the teacher's plans make it possible to perceive

students' points of view and to express that perception.

The basic premise which underlies the research reported in this article is the belief that there are certain teacher characteristics and behaviors which make some English teachers more competent than other English teachers. It would appear that behaviors which characterize high complexity teachers are behaviors which, if emulated, might be helpful in improving student achievement in the classrooms of all English teachers.

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